



OFFICE OF CHAIRMAN PHIL MENDELSON
COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

December 20, 2023

Nyasha Smith, Secretary
Council of the District of Columbia
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Secretary Smith,

Violent crime is occurring at levels not seen in the District since the early 2000s. This year alone, over 260 people have been murdered, and thousands more have been violently assaulted, robbed, or carjacked. We can and must do better to fight the scourge of violent crime and protect our residents. That is why today, I, along with seven of my colleagues, am introducing the “Evidence-Based Gun Violence Reduction and Prevention Act of 2023.”

The bill would implement two recommendations from the National Institute for Criminal Justice Reform’s District of Columbia Gun Violence Reduction Strategic Plan.¹ First, it would establish a Group Violence Intervention Initiative in the District. Group Violence Intervention—also known as focused deterrence or pulling levers—was first implemented in Boston in the 1990s under the name Operation Ceasefire. An evaluation of Operation Ceasefire published in 2001 found that it reduced monthly youth homicides by 63%.² Since then, over seven dozen jurisdictions have implemented Group Violence Intervention Initiatives, most of which experienced significant reductions in violent crime as a result. A meta-analysis published in 2018 found that “In 19 of 24 eligible studies, researchers reported that the implementation of the evaluated program was associated with a statistically significant crime reduction effect on a targeted crime problem.”³

Second, the bill would authorize the Mayor to address “criminal blight” at specific properties in the District by requiring the removal, repair, or securing of any building, wall, structure, or lot, or requiring changes to specific policies, practices, or procedures of the property owner that the police have reason to believe are facilitating criminal activity. Numerous studies have shown that remediating blight reduces gun violence. For instance, one study on blight remediation efforts in Philadelphia found that remediating abandoned buildings reduced firearm assaults by 39% in and around the buildings.⁴

¹ District of Columbia Gun Violence Reduction Strategic Plan, Recommendations #4 and #15, (<https://web.archive.org/web/20220513005605/https://cjcc.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/cjcc/DC%20Violence%20Reduction%20Stratgeic%20Plan%20-%20April%202022%20-%20Final.pdf>).

² Braga, A. A., Kennedy, D. M., Waring, E. J., & Pichl, A. M. (2001). Problem oriented policing, deterrence, and youth violence: An evaluation of Boston’s Operation Ceasefire. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 38, 195–226.

³ Braga, A. A., Weisburd, D., & Turchan, B. (2018). Focused deterrence strategies and crime control: An updated systematic review and meta-analysis of the empirical evidence. *Criminology & Public Policy*, 17(1), pg. 238.

⁴ Branas, C. C., Kondo, M. C., Murphy, S. M., South, E. C., Polsky, D., & MacDonald, J. M. (2016). Urban blight remediation as a cost-beneficial solution to firearm violence. *American journal of public health*, 106(12), 2158-2164.

Another study conducted in a major city found that remediation of vacant and blighted lots decreased gun violence by 29.1% in the neighborhoods in which these lots were located.⁵

The bill also includes proposals that would help sworn officers focus more of their attention and resources on violent crime, increase transparency, and increase support for victims of violent crime:

- Authorizing the Metropolitan Police Department to hire civilian investigators to investigate cold cases and property crimes when there is no expected suspect contact. This is based on a successful initiative started in Mesa, Arizona in 2009 that has since been adopted in cities such as Pheonix, Baltimore, San Francisco, and New Orleans;⁶
- Requiring the Sentencing Commission to produce a Biannual Repeat Violent Offender Report that provides statistics on the number of repeat violent offenders arrested and convicted in the prior year, as well as updates on the disposition of cases involving repeat violent offenders; and
- Requiring the Director of the Department of Healthcare Finance to submit an amendment to the District's State Medicaid Plan to make community violence prevention services available to Medicaid beneficiaries. The Biden Administration provided guidance on this in 2020. Jurisdictions such as Connecticut, California, Illinois, Oregon, and Maryland have utilized this benefit.⁷

Taken together, the proposals in this bill would implement strategies that we know reduce violent crime and better focus our law enforcement efforts on holding violent offenders accountable.

If you have any questions about this legislation, please contact Blaine Stum, Senior Policy Advisor for the Committee of the Whole, at bstum@dccouncil.gov.



Chairman Phil Mendelson

⁵ Branas, C. C., South, E., Kondo, M. C., Hohl, B. C., Bourgois, P., Wiebe, D. J., & MacDonald, J. M. (2018). Citywide cluster randomized trial to restore blighted vacant land and its effects on violence, crime, and fear. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 115(12), 2946-2951.

⁶ See, for instance, Salma Reyes and Nathan Collins, "To shore up dwindling ranks, police departments hire more civilian investigators," In Pursuit, Sept. 20, 2022 (<https://inpursuit.news21.com/2022/09/20/police-hire-more-civilians-investigators-shore-up-ranks/>).

⁷ The Health Alliance for Violence Intervention, HAVI Advocacy Update: Advances in Medicaid (<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5d6f61730a2b610001135b79/t/6390d680480e0436181aa23c/1670436530340/Medicaid-Advocacy-Update-Advances-in-Medicaid.pdf>).

1 

2 Councilmember Brooke Pinto

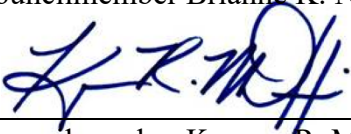

Chairman Phil Mendelson

4 

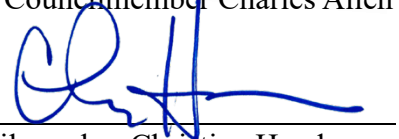
5 Councilmember Brianne K. Nadeau



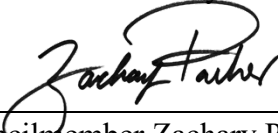
Councilmember Charles Allen

8 

9 Councilmember Kenyan R. McDuffie



Councilmember Christina Henderson

11 

12 Councilmember Zachary Parker



Councilmember Janeese Lewis George

16 A BILL

19
20 IN THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

22
23
24
25 To establish a Group Violence Intervention Initiative and an organizational structure to guide the
26 efforts of the Initiative; to allow the Metropolitan Police Department to hire civilian
27 personnel to respond to and investigate certain property crimes and cold cases; to require
28 the Sentencing Commission to publish a biannual report on repeat violent offenders in the
29 District; to authorize the Mayor to take corrective actions to remediate criminal blight at
30 properties in the District; and to require the Director of the Department of Healthcare
31 Finance to submit an amendment to the Medicaid state plan to make community violence
32 prevention services available to Medicaid beneficiaries.

33
34 BE IT ENACTED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, That this
35 act may be cited as the “Evidence-Based Gun Violence Reduction and Prevention Act of 2023”.

36 **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

37 **TITLE I. GROUP VIOLENCE INTERVENTION INITIATIVE..... 2**

38 **TITLE II. CIVILIAN INVESTIGATORS AT THE METROPOLITAN POLICE**

39 **DEPARTMENT..... 4**

40 **TITLE III. BIANNUAL REPEAT VIOLENT OFFENDER REPORT..... 6**

41 **TITLE IV. ADDRESSING CRIMINAL BLIGHT IN THE DISTRICT..... 8**
42 **TITLE V. MEDICAID FUNDING FOR COMMUNITY VIOLENCE PREVENTION**
43 **SERVICES..... 11**
44 **TITLE VI. FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT; EFFECTIVE DATE..... 14**

45 TITLE I. GROUP VIOLENCE INTERVENTION INITIATIVE.

46 Sec. 101. Establishment of group violence intervention initiative.

47 There is established the District of Columbia Group Violence Intervention Initiative
48 (“Initiative”). The purpose of the Initiative is to address gun violence in the District by focusing
49 law enforcement activities on individuals and groups committing acts of gun violence,
50 coordinating enforcement activities across law enforcement agencies, providing robust social
51 services and supports to individuals willing to cease criminal activity, and proactively engaging
52 residents in communities impacted by gun violence.

53 Sec. 102. Group violence intervention governing board; strategy and implementation
54 team.

55 (a) To implement the Initiative, there is established a:

56 (1) Group Violence Intervention Initiative Governing Board (“Governing Board”).

57 The Governing Board shall have final decision-making authority and provide resources to the
58 strategy and implementation team as deemed necessary. The Governing Board shall include:

59 (A) The Mayor;

60 (B) The City Administrator; and

61 (C) The Chair of the Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety.

62 (2) Strategy and Implementation Team, which shall report to the Governing Board
63 on a regular basis to provide progress updates and request resources as needed. The Strategy and

64 Implementation Team shall handle the daily operations of the Initiative, including making key
65 decisions, developing strategies, securing resources, and continuously monitoring results.

66 (A) The Strategy and Implementation Team shall be composed of 12
67 members. Members of the Strategy and Implementation Team shall include:

68 (i) The Director of the Office of Gun Violence Prevention, who
69 shall serve as the Executive Director;

70 (ii) The Chief of the Metropolitan Police Department, who shall
71 serve as co-chair;

72 (iii) The Executive Director of the Office of Neighborhood Safety
73 and Engagement;

74 (iv) The United States Attorney for the District of Columbia;

75 (v) The Attorney General for the District of Columbia;

76 (vi) The Director of the Court Services and Offender Supervision
77 Agency;

78 (vii) The Director of the Pretrial Services Agency;

79 (viii) Two lieutenants from the Metropolitan Police Department,
80 selected by the Chief;

81 (ix) Two representatives from community-based organizations with
82 a demonstrated history of providing social services and supports to individuals who are at high
83 risk of engaging in gun violence;

84 (x) A researcher with expertise in law enforcement policies and
85 practices whose work has been published in peer-reviewed journals.

86 Sec. 103. Implementation plan.

87 (a) The Strategy and Implementation Team shall develop an implementation plan for the
88 initiative. The implementation plan shall, at a minimum, include:

89 (1) How the Initiative will identify individuals and groups responsible for or at
90 high risk of engaging in gun violence;

91 (2) Key stakeholders, including community members and service providers, who
92 will be engaged as part of the initiative, including proposed engagement strategies;

93 (3) Protocols for conducting call-ins of individuals who may be subject to focused
94 enforcement efforts;

95 (4) How the needs of individuals identified by the Strategy and Implementation
96 Team pursuant to paragraph (1) will be assessed and what services will be offered to these
97 individuals;

98 (5) Proposed performance measures and data that will be utilized to track the
99 outcomes of the initiative; and

100 (6) Resources necessary to effectively implement the Initiative.

101 (b) The implementation plan shall be submitted to the Governing Board for approval
102 within six months of the effective date of this title.

103 Sec. 104. Reporting.

104 (a) On a quarterly basis, the Mayor shall provide a report to the Council that contains data
105 and analysis of performance measures developed by the Strategy and Implementation Team,
106 along with any other information deemed relevant.

107 TITLE II. CIVILIAN INVESTIGATORS AT THE METROPOLITAN POLICE
108 DEPARTMENT.

109 Sec. 201. Civilian investigators.

110 (a) The Metropolitan Police Department is hereby authorized to employ and allow
111 civilian personnel to investigate the following types of incidents when there is no expected
112 suspect contact:

- 113 (1) Commercial burglary;
- 114 (2) Residential burglary;
- 115 (3) Motor vehicle theft;
- 116 (4) Theft;
- 117 (5) Forgery;
- 118 (6) Fraud; and
- 119 (7) Other property crime investigations.

120 (b) In addition to the incidents listed in subsection (a) of this section, civilian personnel
121 may be employed to investigate cold cases.

122 (c) All of the following shall apply to investigators authorized pursuant to subsection (a)
123 of this section:

- 124 (1) The Metropolitan Police Department shall establish minimum standards for
125 employment as an investigator;
- 126 (2) Each investigator shall attend a training program designed by the Metropolitan
127 Police Department;
- 128 (3) Each investigator shall be issued credentials by the Metropolitan Police
129 Department identifying the individual as a civilian investigator;
- 130 (4) Investigators shall be issued a uniform that is substantially different in color
131 and style from that of a sworn officer of the Metropolitan Police Department. The uniform shall

132 have patches that clearly identify the individual as a civilian investigator, and the individual's
133 name shall be clearly displayed on the uniform. Investigators shall not be issued badges;

134 (5) Any vehicles issued to or used by an investigator shall not bear markings or
135 symbols that identify the vehicle as a police cruiser or patrol vehicle. The vehicle may have
136 emergency equipment and lights installed but shall not use blue lights in any manner or form;

137 (6) Investigators shall not be issued a firearm; and

138 (7) Investigators shall have no authority to arrest.

139 (c) The employment or use of investigators as authorized pursuant to subsection (a) of
140 this section shall not supplant or replace existing sworn law enforcement personnel or otherwise
141 cause a reduction in the number of sworn law enforcement officers employed by the
142 Metropolitan Police Department.

143 TITLE III. BIENNIAL REPEAT VIOLENT OFFENDER REPORT.

144 Sec. 301. Biennial repeat offender report from the Sentencing Commission.

145 (a) On January 1, 2025 and every six months thereafter, the Sentencing Commission of
146 the District of Columbia shall publish a repeat violent offender report that contains the following:

147 (1) A de-identified list of repeat violent offenders arrested in the prior year. The
148 list shall include:

149 (A) The date of the arrest;

150 (B) The top charge against the offender;

151 (C) Whether the arrest was papered;

152 (D) For arrests that were papered, the current disposition of the case;

153 (E) The number of prior arrests and convictions for crimes of violence
154 within the last five years, and the specific charges the individual was arrested and/or convicted of
155 for each arrest and conviction;

156 (2) An analysis that shows:

157 (A) The number and percentage of arrests and cases filed with the
158 Superior Court in the prior year involving repeat violent offenders; and

159 (B) The disposition of cases filed with the Superior Court in the year
160 before the prior year; and

161 (3) Any other information the Commission deems relevant or necessary.

162 (b) The report required pursuant to subsection (a) of this section shall be publicly
163 accessible through the Commission's website.

164 (c) For purposes of this section, the term:

165 (1) "Crime of violence" means the following crimes when committed with a
166 firearm:

167 (A) Aggravated assault;

168 (B) Assault with a dangerous weapon;

169 (C) Carjacking,

170 (D) Assault with intent to kill;

171 (E) Kidnapping;

172 (F) Manslaughter;

173 (G) Murder; or

174 (H) Robbery.

175 (2) "Repeat violent offender" means a person who has been arrested for a crime of
176 violence, as defined in paragraph (1) of this subsection, two or more times in the previous five
177 years.

178 TITLE IV. ADDRESSING CRIMINAL BLIGHT IN THE DISTRICT.

179 Sec. 401. Definitions.

180 For purposes of this title, the term:

181 (a) "Controlled substance" shall have the same meaning as § 48-901.02(4).

182 (b) "Corrective action" means:

183 (1) Taking specific actions with respect to the buildings or structures on the
184 property that are reasonably expected to abate criminal blight on such real property, including the
185 removal, repair, or the securing of any building, wall, structure, or lot; or

186 (2) Changing specific policies, practices, or procedures of the real property owner
187 that are reasonably expected to abate criminal blight on real property.

188 (c) "Criminal blight" means a condition existing on real property that endangers the
189 public health or safety of residents of the city and is caused by:

190 (1) The regular presence of, or use of property by, persons illegally possessing,
191 manufacturing, or distributing controlled substances; or

192 (2) Repeated discharging of a firearm within any building, dwelling, structure, or
193 lot.

194 (d) "Owner" means the record owner of the real property.

195 (e) "Real property" means real property as defined under § 47-802(1).

196 Sec. 402. Corrective action of criminal blight.

197 (a)(1) Whenever the owner of any real property in the District of Columbia shall fail or
198 refuse, after the service of reasonable notice pursuant to subsection (b), to correct criminal blight
199 as identified by the Mayor, the Mayor is authorized to cause such condition to be corrected,
200 assess the fair market value of the correction of the condition or the actual cost of the correction,
201 whichever is higher, and all expenses incident thereto as a tax against the property on which the
202 criminal blight existed or arose.

203 (2) The Mayor may utilize funds from § 42-3131.01(b)(1)(A) for corrective
204 actions made pursuant to paragraph (1) of this subsection.

205 (b) The Mayor shall send a notice to the owner of the real property which:

206 (1) Describes the nature of the criminal blight at the real property;

207 (2) Describes the corrective actions that the owner is being requested to take to
208 remediate criminal blight;

209 (3) Advises that the owner has 30 days from the date of receipt of the notice to
210 undertake corrective action to abate the criminal blight;

211 (4) States that failure to take corrective actions pursuant to the notice may result
212 in the District commencing corrective actions, the costs of which will be assessed as a tax against
213 the property.

214 (c) The Mayor may provide an owner with an additional 30 days to comply with the
215 notice issued in subsection (b) of this section if:

216 (1) The owner demonstrates that he or she is making a good-faith effort to
217 comply; and

218 (2) The owner provides sufficient evidence that the inability to comply within 30
219 days of receipt of the notice is outside of his or her control.

220 (d) A copy of the notice sent to the owner pursuant to subsection (b) of this section shall
221 be provided to the Advisory Neighborhood Commission in which the property is located.

222 (e) If an owner takes timely corrective action as prescribed in the notice in subsection (b)
223 of this section, the Mayor shall deem the criminal blight abated and shall promptly provide
224 written notice to the owner that the criminal blight is abated.

225 (f) If an owner, in good faith, takes corrective action, and despite having taken such
226 action, the specific criminal blight identified in the notice provided pursuant to subsection (b) of
227 this section persists, the owner shall be deemed in compliance.

228 Sec. 403. Prioritization of properties.

229 (a) The Mayor shall develop a list of properties at which criminal blight exists. The list
230 shall be used to prioritize properties for the purposes of sending notices and commencing
231 corrective action pursuant to section 402 of this title.

232 (b) The list developed pursuant to subsection (a) of this section shall prioritize properties
233 according to the severity and frequency of criminal blight at the real property. The nature and
234 severity of criminal blight may be measured by:

235 (1) The number of calls for service to police;

236 (2) Law enforcement intelligence information; or

237 (3) The number of arrests of individuals occupying or present at the property.

238 Sec. 404. Reporting of corrective actions.

239 On an annual basis, the Mayor shall provide the Council of the District of Columbia and
240 the Attorney General of the District of Columbia with a report that contains the following
241 information:

- 242 (1) A list of properties at which the Mayor identified criminal blight and provided
243 notice to the owner;
- 244 (2) A brief description of the criminal blight at each property in the list;
- 245 (3) A brief description of the corrective actions requested by the Mayor at each
246 property on the list;
- 247 (4) Whether the owner of the real property took timely corrective action; and
- 248 (5) If the owner did not take timely corrective action, the date on which the
249 District commenced corrective action and the cost of that corrective action.

250 Sec. 405. Availability of other remedies.

251 The provisions of this title shall not limit the availability of other remedies under the law.

252 TITLE V. MEDICAID FUNDING FOR COMMUNITY VIOLENCE PREVENTION
253 SERVICES.

254 Sec. 501. Definitions.

255 For purposes of this title, the term:

256 (a) “Community violence” means intentional acts of interpersonal violence committed by
257 individuals who are not intimately related to the victim.

258 (b) “Community violence prevention services” means evidence-informed, trauma-
259 informed, culturally responsive, supportive, and non-psychotherapeutic services provided by a
260 qualified violence prevention professional for the purpose of promoting improved health
261 outcomes, trauma recovery, and positive behavioral change, preventing injury recidivism and
262 reducing the likelihood that individuals who are victims of violence will commit or promote
263 violence themselves. “Violence prevention services” may include the provision of peer support
264 and counseling, mentorship, conflict mediation, crisis intervention, targeted case management,

265 referrals to licensed healthcare professionals or service providers, community and school support
266 services, and patient education or screening services to victims of community violence.

267 (c) “Director” means the Director of the Department of Healthcare Finance.

268 (d) “Prevention professional” means an individual who works in programs aimed to
269 address specific patient needs.

270 (e) “Qualified violence prevention professional” means a prevention professional who
271 meets the qualifications and conditions of section 503 of this title.

272 Sec. 502. Medicaid plan amendment.

273 (a) Within 60 days of the effective date of this title, the Director shall apply to the federal
274 government for approval of an amendment to the Medicaid state plan to make community
275 violence prevention services available, to the extent permitted by federal law, to any Medicaid
276 beneficiary who has:

277 (1) Been exposed to community violence;

278 (2) A personal history of injury sustained as a result of an act of community
279 violence; and

280 (3) Been referred by a licensed health care provider or social services provider to
281 receive community violence prevention services from a qualified violence prevention
282 professional after such provider determines such beneficiary to be at elevated risk of a violent
283 injury or retaliation resulting from another act of community violence.

284 (b) The Director shall seek any federal approvals necessary to implement this title,
285 including any federal waivers by the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

286 (c) Once federal approval has been applied for pursuant to subsection (a) of this section,
287 the Director shall, in consultation with violence intervention organizations and community-based
288 and hospital-based violence prevention programs:

289 (1) Issue guidance on the use of community violence prevention services for
290 beneficiaries who access these services under the medical assistance program; and

291 (2) Determine the maximum allowable rates for community violence prevention
292 services based on the medical assistance program fee-for-service outpatient rates for the same or
293 similar services or any other data deemed reliable and relevant by the Director.

294 Sec. 503. Qualified violence prevention professionals.

295 (a) Within 90 days of the effective date of this title, the Department of Health shall, in
296 consultation with the Director of the Office of Gun Violence Prevention, approve at least one
297 governmental or nongovernmental accrediting body with expertise in community violence
298 prevention services to review and approve training and certification programs for qualified
299 violence prevention professionals. The accrediting body shall approve programs that such body
300 determines, in its discretion, will adequately prepare individuals to provide community violence
301 prevention services to individuals who are victims of community violence. Such programs shall
302 include at least 35 hours of training and address the following:

303 (1) The effects of trauma and violence;

304 (2) The basics of trauma-informed care;

305 (3) Community violence prevention strategies, including conflict mediation and
306 retaliation prevention related to community violence, case management, and advocacy practices;

307 and

308 (4) Patient privacy and the federal Health Insurance Portability and Accountability
309 Act of 1996 (P.L. 104-191).

310 (b) Any prevention professional seeking certification as a qualified violence prevention
311 professional shall:

312 (1) Complete at least six months of full-time equivalent experience in providing
313 community violence prevention services or youth development services through employment,
314 volunteer work, or as part of an internship experience;

315 (2) Complete the training and certification program approved by the Department
316 of Health pursuant to subsection (a) of this section for qualified violence prevention
317 professionals;

318 (3) Complete annually at least four of continuing education by a provider
319 approved by the Department of Health in the field of community violence prevention services;
320 and

321 (4) Satisfy any other requirements established by the Department of Health for
322 certification as a qualified violence prevention professional.

323 (c) Any entity that employs or contracts with a qualified violence prevention professional
324 to provide community violence prevention services shall:

325 (1) Maintain documentation that the qualified violence prevention professional
326 has met all of the qualifications and conditions of subsection (b) of this section; and

327 (2) Ensure that the qualified violence prevention professional is providing
328 services in compliance with any applicable standards of care, rules, regulations, and laws.

329 TITLE VI. FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT; EFFECTIVE DATE.

330 Sec. 601. Fiscal impact statement.

331 The Council adopts the fiscal impact statement in the committee report as the fiscal
332 impact statement required by section 4a of the General Legislative Procedures Act of 1975,
333 approved October 16, 2006 (120 Stat. 2038; D.C. Official Code § 1-301.47a).

334 Sec. 602. Effective date.

335 This act shall take effect following approval by the Mayor (or in the event of veto by the
336 Mayor, action by the Council to override the veto), a 60-day period of congressional review as
337 provided in section 602(c)(2) of the District of Columbia Home Rule Act, approved December
338 24, 1973 (87 Stat. 813; D.C. Official Code § 1-206.02(c)(2)), and publication in the District of
339 Columbia Register.